



At the All Saint's University of Medicine
Classes are now in session.

Aruba is a destination for over a million people a year coming to enjoy the balmy breezes, sugar sand beaches and calm, turquoise waters. Since January of this year, it is also a destination for students from around the world coming to study medicine. The All Saint's University of Medicine of Toronto, Canada opened its Aruba branch in January, and the first semester with sixteen students attending, ended in April. In mid-May the second semester began with double the students and professors, and administrators expect they will double again when the next semester begins in September. Occupying the third floor of the Sun Plaza building on the outskirts of Oranjestad, the All Saint's University has also doubled their physical size, with new equipment and practical labs set up for the current semester.

Long days of intensive classes are now attended by thirty students wishing to complete the accelerated program, starting from nine in the morning until six in the evening, every day, five days per week. A number of the students have already attended classes at other medical schools and are completing the last years of their education before going on to their hospital rotations in the states or Canada.

On staff is Acting Dean of the School, Dr. Ali Mohammad, giving classes in Histology and Anatomy, Dr. Sipasert Chansavang instructing in Psychology, Clinical Epidemiology, and Medical Ethics, Dr. Shola Obasa in Pathology and Organic Chemistry, and Dr. Priyanjith Peiris, teaching Neuroscience and Microbiology. For students in the premedical program Spanish and Mathematics are also required courses. Both teaching doctors and students have a varied and international background originating in Africa and Asia, with one student coming from Brazil. Of the thirty students attending the school, only four are in the Premedical program, and most are transferring from institutions in Canada or the United States.

Why a medical school in Aruba? Two have existed on the neighboring island of Bonaire for three years, and Aruba joins a number of Caribbean islands as a destination for aspiring doctors. The demand for medical training facilities, particularly for international students from third world countries is enormous. In Canada, there are 14,000 first year students vying for only 700 places in medical schools per year, in the United States there are 16,000 first year spots available, but an average of 47,000 students applying for them. The first Caribbean Medical College was opened twenty-seven years ago in Georgetown, Granada, and since then there are more than fifteen islands that have established medical schools. Aruba also awarded a charter to the Xavier University School of Medicine in November of last year, but they have yet to begin classes.

The establishment of a Medical School in Aruba provides benefits to all parties involved, but one of the major benefits to the island is the stipulation in the school's charter that they must provide two full scholarships per year to native islanders. Gerrald Martes and Bryant Croes are taking full advantage of this requirement, attending the Premedical program taught by Dr. Nantha-Gopal and Dr. Obasa. Gerrald began the course with his HAVO high school diploma; Bryant had completed his VWO, and had been accepted to the Bio Medische Wetenschappen Medical School in Amsterdam, but applied to the Ministry of Health and Education for a scholarship to All Saint's. Being accepted to the program will provide a great financial relief to his family, and he can still be at home, another financial and social benefit.

Nineteen-year-old Bryant has wanted to be a doctor since he was twelve years old, and looks forward to doing an internship in the states. A life of being actively involved in sports made him very conscious about the care of his body and sparked his interest in a medical career. He particularly finds the field of internal medicine appealing, but that could change once he begins his clinical rotations.

Because of his EMT work, twenty-year-old Gerrald developed an interest in the medical field, though he is unsure about his future. He is enjoying his studies, finds them not difficult, but very time consuming and is focusing on completing the program to the best of his abilities. He admits that he would never have been able to take the medical training or pursue a medical career if the opportunity to study on his home island was not available.

There are other native islanders interested in attending the All Saint's University of Medicine, but they will have to either wait for next year to win a scholarship, or look to arranging a government loan, as is part of the program for Arubian students studying abroad.

When meeting the students of All Saint's University of Medicine, one observes the jocularity and exuberance of young people, but also a deeply serious determination to succeed. These young men and women have a vision and direction for their lives, the persistence to accomplish their goals, and are grateful

for the opportunity to pursue their studies on Aruba, and it is certainly preferable to spending most of the year being cold in Toronto!
Interested parties can acquire information about tuition and prerequisites for the All Saint's Medical School in their office on the ground level of the Sun Plaza building, or call telephone # 560-2707.